

HENRY JAMES

The Untried Years

1843-1870

*

By LEON EDEL

To live over people's lives is nothing unless we live over their perceptions, live over the growth, the change, the varying intensity of the same—since it was *by* these things they themselves lived.

HENRY JAMES

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1869-1870

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ILLUSTRATIONS

HENRY JAMES AT SIXTEEN OR SEVENTEEN *Frontispiece*

"I directed Notman, of Boston, to send you a photograph of a little old—ever so ancient—ambrotype lent me by Lilla Perry to have copied—her husband T.S.P. having been in obscure possession of it for half a century. . . . I strike myself as such a sweet little thing that I want you, and your mother, to see it in order to believe it." *Henry James to Ellen (Temple) Emmet, 15 August 1911.*

GRANDMOTHER, MOTHER, AUNT facing page 48

Catharine Barber James about 1855, as Henry James remembered her; Mrs. Henry James Senior in middle life. Catherine Walsh (Aunt Kate), Mrs. James's sister.

HENRY JAMES SENIOR AND HENRY JUNIOR 88

From the daguerreotype by Matthew Brady, 1854, used by Henry James as a frontispiece to *A Small Boy and Others* and described by him in that book: "I shall have strained the last drop of romance from this vision of our towny summers with the quite sharp reminiscence of my first sitting for my daguerreotype. I repaired with my father on an August day to the great Broadway establishment of Mr. Brady, supreme in that then beautiful art. . . . Beautiful most decidedly the lost art of the daguerreotype; I remember the 'exposure' as on this occasion interminably long, yet with the result of a facial anguish far less harshly reproduced than my suffered snapshots of a later age."

HENRY JAMES AT GENEVA 152

From a hitherto unpublished photograph now in the Houghton Library at Harvard taken during the winter of 1859-60.

HENRY JAMES AT NEWPORT, AGED TWENTY 176

A photograph taken at the time of the writing of "A Tragedy of Error" and "The Story of a Year." "I remember (it now all comes back to me) when (and where) I was so taken: at the age of 20, though I look younger, and at a time when I had had an accident (an injury to my back,) and was rather sick and sorry. I look rather as if I wanted propping up." *Henry James to Mrs. Frank Mathews, 18 November 1902.*

MINNY TEMPLE AT SIXTEEN *facing page* 230

From a photograph sent to William James by Minny Temple's sister. Her hair had been cropped during an illness. William in his characteristically humorous vein described the cutting of hair as an act of madness: "let's speak of Minny and her fearful catastrophe. . . . I have often had flashes of horrid doubts about that girl. . . . Was she all alone when she did it? Could no one wrest the shears from her vandal hand? I declare I fear to return home. . . . I shall weep as soon as I have finished this letter." *William James to Katherine Temple, September 1861.*

WILLIAM JAMES AT TWENTY-FIVE 248

From a photograph in the Houghton Library.

FROM HENRY JAMES'S SKETCH-BOOK, 1869 296

"The novelist had, he said, the painter's eye, adding that few writers possessed it." *John La Farge, quoted by his biographer, Royal Cortissoz.*

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is the story of the childhood and youth of Henry James—a portrait of the artist as a young man. In a sequel I hope to tell of the fashioning of his great career during his “middle years” in Paris and London; and finally I hope to trace the evolution of the legendary “Master”—for so his peers came to call him—the architect of the modern novel. His was a large life and it requires a large canvas.

Henry James stands astride two centuries and reaches backward to a third; with him the American novel, in a single leap, attained a precocious maturity it has never surpassed. And it is now recognized that with Henry James the novel in English achieved its greatest perfection. By some queer irony, a writer from the New World—in an era when Americans were preoccupied with ever-widening frontiers and material things—arrived upon the scene of the Old World to set the house of fiction in order. To this Henry James dedicated the whole of his life. He became in his time—and reaching over into ours—the first great theorist and scholar in the art which he himself practised with such distinction.

So large an artist becomes visible only by degrees after his death. Those closest to him in our century knew only the old man, and perpetuated the man they knew; in the process they embalmed for posterity the heavy-lidded talkative Master of Rye and Chelsea, but overlooked the sharp-visioned, crisp and witty, bearded James of the 1880's, and totally lost sight of the shy but purposeful, and prodigiously creative, young American who arrived in Paris at thirty-two and consorted with Turgenev and the heirs of Balzac. The figure of Henry James remembered today is a curious and encrusted pastiche of anecdote and rumour, as Simon Nowell-Smith showed in his painstaking and urbane compilation, *The Legend of the Master*. Few have gone in search of the small boy James tenderly evoked in his autobiographies, or